Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] Stress
[Text] 1 Kings 17:2-4, 15, 16; 19:1, 2; Mark 6:31-34; Galatians 6:2; John 15:13
[Use] January 15, 2010

What emotions did you feel as you faced 2011? Did you look forward to this New Year with calm, or did you feel overwhelming stress? Maybe you faced the pressure of mounting bills. Maybe you felt the strain of too much to do in too little time. Maybe you felt the weight of unresolved issues with a family member or friend. Or maybe you felt nervous about the many unsettling events happening around the world.

The medical site FamilyDoctor.org says, “feelings of stress are caused by the body’s instinct to defend itself.”¹ This instinct is good when we’re faced with an emergency, but stress that builds over time can be harmful to our bodies. How we think and react to stress can cause new health problems, or make existing health problems worse. Take a look at the long list of the harmful effects of stress:

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping or insomnia
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck or jaw
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

None of us can live without stress—both good and bad stresses are a part of life. Yet we can all learn to manage stress better. Sometimes we handle stress by succumbing to bad habits that temporarily relieve stress, yet they’re harming our bodies: overeating, not eating enough, taking pills to relax or to sleep, smoking and drinking, sleeping too much, and withdrawing socially. These are hard habits to break, and stress leaves us little energy remaining to break them. It’s a vicious cycle. Here are some ways to deal with stress in a productive way:

- Don’t worry about things you can’t control, such as the weather
- Solve the little problems. This can help you gain a feeling of control
- Prepare to the best of your ability for events you know may be stressful, such as a job interview
- Try to look at change as a positive challenge, not as a threat
- Work to resolve conflicts with other people
• Talk with a trusted friend, family member or counselor
• Set realistic goals at home and at work. Avoid over scheduling
• Exercise on a regular basis
• Eat regular, well-balanced meals and get enough sleep
• Participate in something you don't find stressful, such as sports, social events or hobbies

As Christians, we have something else to add to this list: go to Jesus in prayer. It’s not a clichéd statement. When we go to Him, we know that we’re going to Someone who understands. Jesus certainly had His share of stressful situations when he lived on earth. When we go to Him, we know Someone cares. If He loved us enough to die for us, He cares about our every concern. And when we go to Him, we have the peace that comes from knowing we’re not carrying our burdens alone, Someone else is in charge. Jesus knows the beginning from the end, and can be trusted to guide our lives.

The invitation in Matthew 11:28 is for everyone: “Come to me, all you who are wearied and burdened, and I will give you rest.” God’s rest may come through an overwhelming feeling of peace, through an idea on how to solve a stressful problem, through a realization that we can actually let go of something—the possibilities are many. But they aren’t available until we first accept Jesus’ invitation, and “Come”.

~nc

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